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## Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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### **Fire Island National Seashore Project Lands Semifinalist Award in National Science Talent Search Competition**

**Local Ward Melville High School Student Jana Hirsch is Honored**

*Patchogue, NY*— A local high school student Jana Hirsch, from Ward Melville High in East Setauket, has been named a semifinalist in a national science competition for research which was conducted at Fire Island National Seashore. In the 65-year history of the annual Science Talent Search, now sponsored by the Intel Corporation, this is the first time that work in a national park on Long Island has won such recognition. Jana is one of 12 students from Ward Melville High School to take top honors in individual categories and advance to the national competition.

Other Long Island districts had multiple winners in the nation's oldest high-school research contest. In all, 34 area high schools produced 82 semifinalists this year. Each wins \$1,000 individually and equal amounts for their schools. Forty finalists will be announced on January 25, and will compete in mid-March in Washington, D.C., for top prizes, including a \$100,000 first-place award.

Most Long Island schools that do well in science competitions use school research coordinators and teachers who oversee students' projects and help them find mentors at colleges and laboratories. Ward Melville, which previously has taken second and third place, has a special advantage with its proximity to mentors at Stony Brook University. Ms. Hirsch worked with Dr. Henry Bokuniewicz of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook under a research permit issued by the park. Dr. Bokuniewicz has been doing research at Fire Island National Seashore for over 15 years.

The project involved monitoring wave conditions, which is integral information needed for the management of coastal erosion and shoreline change. Ms. Hirsch told the park, "My project involved investigating the possibility of using a land-based seismic system to record water wave energy impacting the beach. Our experiments were done to document the increase in the

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strength of the seismic signal with increasing water/wave height and the decrease in the seismic signal with increasing distance from the shore. Evidence was also found to suggest that long-period infragravity water waves were also detectable in the seismic records.” Ms. Hirsch went on to say, “I am very honored with the award and thank you for allowing me to perform my research at Fire Island National Seashore.”

Seashore Superintendent Michael Reynolds stated “This is very exciting for the park. Not only will the information be useful as we develop our management policies for the myriad of coastal issues that we deal with on a daily basis, but to have a local high school student be the first on Long Island to win such a prestigious award for work in a National Park is fantastic. SUNY Stony Brook is one of our Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units for the National Park Service (NPS) and has been involved in a number of research projects at Fire Island NS. This is a great example of a partnership that now includes local high students getting involved in NPS research activities.”

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